

2013

Dear Practice Educator

Important Information for Practice Educators of your practice placement students from _____ University (one of the five universities below): about the Occupational Therapy Student Competency Website, *Occupational Therapy Competencies Australia (OTCA)* otca.net.au

Thank you for taking an occupational therapy student/s from the _____ University. We are writing to inform you of an innovative new website with a method of assessing student competence that has been developed by five partner universities, led by **University of Newcastle with partners La Trobe University, James Cook University, University of Western Sydney and Charles Sturt University.**

The _____ University _____ Year students will be the first at this University to trial this new system.

As you know, the Australian Minimum Competency Standards for Graduate Occupational Therapists were published in 2010 by Occupational Therapy Australia (OTA). National registration of occupational therapists was also introduced in 2012. Prior to this, competency has been presumed at the end of an accredited academic program, as there is no national framework for evidencing the competency of graduates. In 2010, an Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT) grant was awarded to the University of Newcastle and the four partner universities to develop a framework to help develop and evidence students' graduating competence.

In 2011 ten focus groups of students and practice educators were completed in the five Australian universities as part of this grant and discussions were held with Heads of School of universities with occupational therapy programs and Heads of Practice Education. Results: Students and practice educators requested a range of resources to assist them in interpreting the broad competencies into practice skills and guidance on acceptable evidence.

An interactive website with a range of resources has been developed which students can use to support their competence development; and record, track and evidence their competence.

The project team has developed several key tools for the website, including the:

- **Three Competency Development Levels:** Emerging, Consolidating & Competent to Graduate – to help students, practice educators and lecturers gauge students' development.
- **Occupational Therapy Practice Process** – a process to help students make sense of the general steps of practice. It identifies 7 steps of practice plus the centrally placed Being a Professional section which is applicable at all times throughout the practice process. It also defines practice reasoning relevant to each step.

These two key tools above form the website framework against which the following competency evidencing mechanism (the Occupational Therapy Competency Evidencing Matrix (OTCEM)) is built.

- **Occupational Therapy Competency Evidencing Matrix (OTCEM)** – an evidencing framework tool that students can use to self-assess, evidence and track their developing competence by ticking-off the achieved OTCEM practice competency statements against the appropriate **level** and **Occupational Therapy Practice Process step/s**. They can also upload their supporting evidence for their achieved competence or provide a description of their competence to their website ePortfolio which holds a summary of their developing competence. The OTCEM is also used as a competency assessment tool for practice educators to verify the student's competence by verifying the student's OTCEM and supporting evidence in their ePortfolio.

The Australian Minimum Competency Standards for New Graduate Occupational Therapists (ACSOT) published in 2010 by Occupational Therapy Australia (OTA), using the PRACSOT performance criteria, Performance Record for the Australian Competency Standards for Occupational Therapists (PRACSOT) 2010 developed by Occupational Therapy Australia (OTA). The OTCEM is linked electronically within the website to an ePRACSOT which is automatically populated/ticked-off as a record of competence for graduation once the practice educator/s and/or lecturer/s have verified the student's self-assessed OTCEM in the website.

- **Practice Placement Cycle** – a term used within the website describing the website cycle used to help students prepare for practice and evidence their competence in a developmental and systematic way. There are 6 stages of this cycle:
 1. Prepare for Placement
 2. Writing Your Learning Objectives
 3. Resources to Develop Your Competencies
 4. Self-Assess Your Competencies
 5. Evidence Your Competencies and
 6. Your ePortfolio - which is where students: upload, record, track and store their supporting evidence of achieved competencies forming a summary of the students' competencies; and where they can reflect using a reflective diary and a section to help them to use their reflection in thinking about their next practice placement. Students give their lecturers and practice educators access to selected evidence to assess and verify.

Students can use the **Practice Placement Cycle** found on the website homepage to prepare for practice, write a letter of introduction to their Practice Educator, develop their learning contract and learning objectives, access the key tools and resources outlined above to help their development, use the OTCEM to evidence their competence and upload supporting evidence to their website ePortfolio and reflect.

Resources: The website also contains useful resources for the students, including a range of videos, documents, quizzes and web links to support competency development. These resources are arranged within the relevant steps of the Occupational Therapy Practice Process on the website. These resources are also useful to practice educators and lecturers in helping guide students' competency development.

Also attached is an OTCA Website Fact Sheet with a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), including information on how to:

- Access the Occupational Therapy Competencies Australia (OTCA) website: otca.net.au
- Register in the OTCA website as a Practice Educator to verify your student's competence
- Verify your student's competence in the website.

You can access the website now at otca.net.au to register and see the website resources and OTCEM.

You can also watch a 'Captivate' video about using the website, which will soon be located on the OTCA Website homepage: otca.net.au

Primarily, students will manage their ePortfolio. Practice Educators will also have a role – to assist students by verifying the students' competencies in the OTCA Website OTCEM and their supporting evidence in their website ePortfolio. It will be most beneficial to your student if you use the website OTCEM and view your student's ePortfolio within the website.

Please read the Fact Sheet 'Frequently Asked Questions' (FAQ) below, but also discuss this new website and the OTCEM with your student. They have been prepared on its use.

Alternatively, contact us here at the university at:

Caroline.hills@newcastle.edu.au

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We hope that you will work with your students who now need to evidence their competency development and attainment.

With many thanks

The University of Newcastle (UoN) Project Team:

Susan Ryan, Carol Hills, Kim Nguyen, Catherine Studdert and Paul Sijpkens
and Partners:

Carol McKinstry, Lee Zakrewski, Matthew Yau and Michael Curtin.

Occupational Therapy Competencies Australia (OTCA) Website

FACT SHEET FOR PRACTICE EDUCATORS

Frequently Asked Questions About the:

Occupational Therapy Competencies Australia (OTCA) Website & Occupational Therapy Competency Evidencing Matrix (OTCEM)

What is the OTCA Website?

The Occupational Therapy Competencies Australia (OTCA) Website otca.net.au is a student-focused website with an ePortfolio for students based on the 2010 Australian Minimum Competency Standards for Graduate Occupational Therapists (OTA, 2010). It contains a range of resources, such as videos, quizzes, documents and web links for students and educators about competence and practice. The site is based on each practice placement, with each complete placement being called a 'Practice Placement Cycle'. The OTCEM contains a range of competency statements at three competency development levels: Emerging, Consolidating and Competent to Graduate, defining competence for both students and their practice educators.

What does the OTCEM do?

The OTCEM is an OTCA website tool providing a method of defining a student's competence. At the beginning of the placement it can be used to help guide students when setting their Learning Objectives. Educators may use the OTCEM to review achievements and set further Learning Objectives weekly or at regular times throughout the placement. It can be used to give specific feedback on competencies attained, at both halfway (formative) and the end of the placement (summative).

What is the minimum use of the OTCEM?

We ask educators to use the OTCEM at least twice during placement – halfway and at the end of placement, but at the minimum at the end of the placement.

Does it replace the SPEF-R?

No, the SPEF-R must be completed at halfway and at the end of the placement. But if you complete the OTCEM, it should assist in defining the feedback to the student on the SPEF-R.

How does the student use the OTCEM?

Your student has registered on the OTCA website and will be using the OTCEM to record their competence and be building an ePortfolio to evidence their competence. One main source of evidence is your observation of their competency attainment in placement. Students will self-assess their competence by 'ticking' the OTCEM competency statements which they consider they have achieved. The student then asks you, as their practice placement educator, to verify this self-assessment of their competence. The website OTCEM provides helpful Observed Behaviours against each competency statement to help practice educators when assessing the student. Students can also write narratives (case stories) or reflections on their competency development. Students may ask you to verify these as 'true' accounts or may submit these to the University for marking.

Please Note: Students are not permitted to use any confidential client information or client-related documents as evidence.

A student will be able to view different stages of evidenced competence in their ePortfolio providing a complete record. The practice educator and lecturer can see these too, once shared by the student.

A colour-coding system has been used to help you:

- **Blue** – Evidenced and awaiting practice educator verification
Once a student ticks off the OTCEM competency statements they have achieved and uploaded supporting evidence (either hard evidence or a description of how they achieved the particular competence) the competence pending verification will show in blue in their ePortfolio
- **Yellow** – Assessed and verified by the practice educator
Once the practice educator has assessed and verified the student's ticked OTCEM competency statements and supporting evidence, it will show as yellow in the student's ePortfolio
- **Purple** – Previously assessed and verified competence
All previously assessed OTCEM competence will show as purple in the student's ePortfolio.

What are the levels of competency on the OTCEM?

There are Three Competency Development Levels in the OTCEM:

- **Emerging**
- **Consolidating**
- **Competent to Graduate**

Each statement reflects the competency level, so educators just have to decide which statement best represents the observed practice of the student. These levels are used throughout the OTCA website.

Can students have different competency development levels for different aspects of practice?

Yes, a student may have attained a combination of Emerging, Consolidating and Competent to Graduate on the OTCEM at the end of the placement.

Do I have to tick every box in the OTCEM?

No, you are only verifying the OTCEM competency statements that the student has self-assessed by ticking. If you agree with the ticked competency statement(s), you do not need to click anything, however, if you do not agree you click Disagree. You are verifying just the ones you consider the student has attained. You then leave brief overall feedback in the box provided to explain why you agreed/disagreed. Your student's achievements will provide positive feedback, and areas of lower competence will focus students on their learning goals.

Please Note: You can optionally tick competency statements that have not been ticked by the student if you feel that the student has attained that level and step for that competency statement or piece of evidence.

Can I disagree with a previous educator?

Yes, you can disagree with a previous practice educator over-riding and/or changing the ticked competency statements and/or level if that is your opinion of the student's demonstrated level of competence. This will be recorded in the OTCEM and the corresponding ePRACSOT system within the website.

How do I know they have achieved a competency during this practice placement?

Review the competency statement, if you are unsure as to the behaviours that the student should have completed to achieve the competence, click on **Observed Behaviours**. This helpful function is only available on the online OTCEM. If the student has demonstrated this to adequate standard on more than one occasion, the student has achieved the competence.

What if there is more than one educator?

Each educator can verify evidence, such as case stories or narratives, and use the OTCEM to plan placement activities, but it is best if the educators discuss and agree on the student's competency achieved as shown on the OTCEM and one educator takes the lead on verifying the OTCEM.

How do I verify the OTCEM on the website?

Firstly, you will need to register as a Practice Educator on the OTCA website. Follow the instructions below.

How to register as a practice educator on the OTCA website:

1. You can use either: Mozilla Firefox/Internet Explorer 9+/Google Chrome/Safari or Opera as your web browser. The site also works on iOS (iPhone, iPad etc.) and Android (e.g. Samsung Galaxy) devices.

NB: if you are using Internet Explorer as is used in HNEH, CSR and other institutions, please ensure that the browser is NOT running in Compatibility Mode.

To Turn Off Compatibility View for a Website in Internet Explorer

A) Click/tap on the highlighted (blue) Compatibility View icon button. (See right)

NOTE: The webpage will now reload with Compatibility View turned off for it.



2. Enter otca.net.au in the web browser search bar or Google: Occupational Therapy Competencies Australia.
3. On the top right hand corner of the OTCA website homepage is the registration link.



4. Click on this, you may get a security message that asks if you want to load insecure items, if so click “Yes”.
5. Fill in your details. **It is very important that you use your official work email address.**

5. You will then receive a verification email with a link – click on the link or paste it into your browser.
6. This will return you to the OTCA website, you will get a message to the effect that your registration was successful. Now click on “Log in” in the top right hand corner of the homepage.

Please Note: Initially, you will be registered as a student. You will need to contact the OTCA Website Administrator for the university you are affiliated with via email, to have your registration upgraded to a Practice Educator.

This process is critical to maintain the security and integrity of the competency verification.

For Practice Educators attached to _____ University, the website administrator contact is:

You will also find your OTCA Website Administrator's email details within a link in the red section on the website registration page. You can also follow this link to see a list:

<https://otca.net.au/partners/web-admin-list>

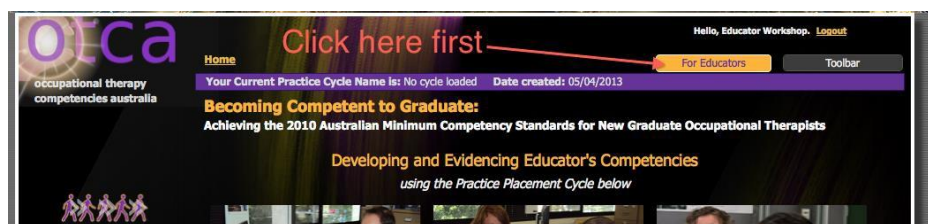
If you have any technical difficulties with this, please contact:

webmaster@otca.net.au or enquiries@otca.net.au

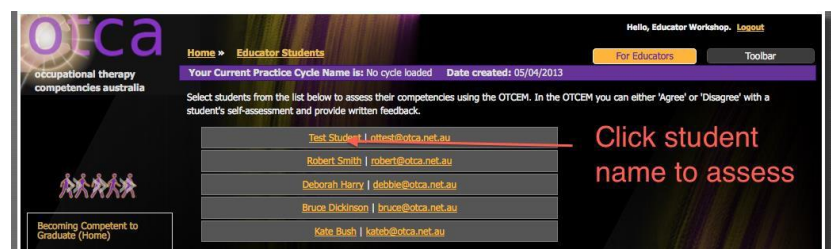
Once you have registered as a Practice Educator, there is a simple verification process (below) that will enable you to view the student's online OTCEM, Agree or Disagree with the student's self-assessment of their competence and view their supporting evidence.

How to verify the student's competency and evidence using the OTCA website:

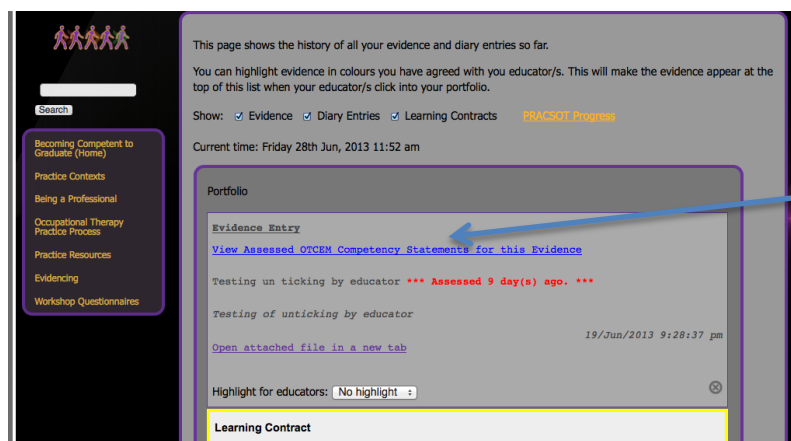
1. After logging in, click on the yellow "For Educators" button.



2. Then click the student you wish to assess.



3. Now click "Assess Matrix Competency for this Evidence" on the student's ePortfolio timeline to view and verify their OTCEM ticked self-assessment, supporting comment/description or piece of evidence.



Click to assess

4. Now you will see your student's self-assessed OTCEM waiting for your verification. The OTCEM shows a page for each step. You can select the steps from the 'View Step' drop down menu. Each step contains competency statements (with tick boxes) for each level: Emerging, Consolidating and Competent to Graduate arranged in practice themes as seen in the left hand column. The student ticks the achieved competency statement/s against the appropriate level.

OTCEM Showing Ticked Competencies with Supporting Descriptive and/or Uploaded Evidence

The Occupational Therapy Competency Evidencing Matrix (OTCEM) is mapped and linked to the Performance Record for the Australian Competency Standards for Occupational Therapists (PRACSOT) Occupational Therapy Australia, 2010 - [click here for more information](#)

"Evidence Test AAA"

Submitted by: Test Student - ottest@otca.net.au

View step: **Step 1 - Request for Service**

Assessment/Verification Legend

■ = Current Assessed Competencies ■ = Other Assessed Competencies ■ = Self-Assessed Competencies Awaiting Assessment

PRACTICE THEMES	OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PRACTICE PROCESS STEP & LEVEL	OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PRACTICE PROCESS STEP & LEVEL	OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PRACTICE PROCESS STEP & LEVEL
Step 1:	Request for Service (RFS): Emerging	Request for Service (RFS): Consolidating	Request for Service (RFS): Competent to Graduate
Competency Statements			
Being efficient & maintaining quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Explains the RFS process at team /service level and the policy on recording/storage of client information and maintaining confidentiality	<input type="checkbox"/> Participates in the RFS process at team /service level and the policy on recording/storage of client information and maintaining confidentiality	<input type="checkbox"/> Manages all aspects of RFS at team/service level in a timely manner, implementing record management policy and maintaining confidentiality
Implementing professional standards	<input type="checkbox"/> Explains non-discriminatory practice at the RFS step	<input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates non-discriminatory practice and respects the rights of the clients to refuse service - with assistance	<input type="checkbox"/> Independently implements non-discriminatory practice and respects the rights of the clients to refuse service

5. These competency statements are mapped to the relevant 2010 PRACSOT performance criteria – click on these for reference.

View step: **Step 1 - Request for Service**

Assessment/Verification Legend

■ = Current Assessed Competencies ■ = Other Assessed Competencies ■ = Self-Assessed Competencies Awaiting Assessment

PRACSOT Performance Criteria Details

These are the PRACSOT Performance Criteria that this Evidencing Matrix competency statement is fulfilling.

Evidencing Matrix Competency Statement

1.3.5	Are privacy, confidentiality and consent/permission of client, family, significant others, colleagues and employing organisation respected and maintained?
5.1.6	Is the client made aware of how the occupational therapist will record, use and store personal information?

Observed behaviours

PRACSOT Performance Criteria: 5.1.6, 1.3.5

6. You can also click on the Observed Behaviours relevant to each competency statement to help guide your assessment of the student.

OTCEM Showing Ticked Competencies with Supporting Descriptive and/or Uploaded Evidence

The Occupational Therapy Competency Evidencing Matrix (OTCEM) is mapped and linked to the Performance Record for the Australian Competency Standards for Occupational Therapists (PRACSOT) Occupational Therapy Australia, 2010 - [click here for more information](#)

"Evidence Test AAA"

Submitted by: Test Student - att

View step: **Step 2: Information Gathering**

Assessment/Verification Level

☒ = Current Assessed Competency

Competency Statements

PRACTICE THEMES	OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PRACTICE PROCESS STEP & LEVEL	OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PRACTICE PROCESS STEP & LEVEL	OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PRACTICE PROCESS STEP & LEVEL
Step 2:	Information Gathering: Emerging	Information Gathering: Consolidating	Information Gathering: Competent to Graduate
Being client-centred	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies what other information is required to proceed with the request for service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participates in the collection of relevant information with cognisance of client's needs and service expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leads on the collection of relevant information regarding client's needs, strengths and service expectations

Observed behaviours:

PRACSOT Performance Criteria: 1.1.2, 2.1.2, 2.1.3

7. Click 'Disagree' if you disagree with any of the student's self-assessments in the matrix. Yellow indicates the current piece of assessed evidence, blue indicates competencies submitted by the student and waiting to be assessed, and purple indicates another piece of evidence that has previously been assessed. You can disagree with purple items as well, meaning you are over-riding a previous assessment.

Competency Statements

PRACTICE THEMES	OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PRACTICE PROCESS STEP & LEVEL	OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PRACTICE PROCESS STEP & LEVEL	OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PRACTICE PROCESS STEP & LEVEL
Step 1:	Request for Service (RFS): Emerging	Request for Service (RFS): Consolidating	Request for Service (RFS): Competent to Graduate
Being efficient & maintaining quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explains the RFS process at team /service level and the policy on recording/ storage of client information and maintaining confidentiality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participates in the RFS process at team /service level and the policy on recording/ storage of client information and maintaining confidentiality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manages all aspects of RFS at team/service level in a timely manner, implementing record management policy and maintaining confidentiality
Implementing professional standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explains non-discriminatory practice at the RFS step 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates non-discriminatory practice and respects the rights of the clients to refuse service - with assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independently implements non-discriminatory practice and respects the rights of the clients to refuse service

Example of previously assessed competency statement

Example of current assessed statement

8. Provide some concise, meaningful feedback on why you agreed or disagreed with any competency statements that the student had ticked. A short, meaningful, encouraging statement of 150 words or more is ideal.

case discussions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describes the documentation policy at RFS and writes draft case notes for educator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writes objective, concise and relevant case records or reports at RFS to policy standard with guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writes objective, legible, concise, relevant case records /reports to policy standard (sign-off by educator)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describes how communication is adapted to meet preferred communication styles of the client 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amends communication strategies to accommodate client's culture, language, sensory impairment, intellectual disability or other communication styles - with guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapts communication strategies to accommodate client's culture, language, sensory impairment, intellectual disability or to meet individual communication styles

Please provide meaningful written feedback for the student. A minimum of 375 characters (about 150 words) is required.

Short meaningful, feedback here...

Feedback

Submit and Complete Assessment 341 characters to go.

9. Once you have provided your feedback, click the 'Submit and Complete Assessment' button below the feedback box and log out. The student can then view the relevant verification and feedback in their OTCA Website ePortfolio.

How do I verify the OTCEM via hard copy if I can't access the OTCA website?

In order for the website to work efficiently and record the student's competency attainment, the OTCEM needs to be completed on the website, which will then automatically populate/tick-off the corresponding ePRACSOT necessary to show their competence to graduate.

However, if you cannot access the website, you can verify the student's competency attainment during and/or at the end of the placement by ticking or circling those competencies achieved on a hardcopy OTCEM and sign and date it. The student will then upload the hardcopy OTCEM to their ePortfolio and the university will verify it, based on your signature.

How long does it take to complete the OTCEM?

This is difficult to predict. Educators tell us it can take 1-2 hours to complete the SPEF-R. We predict it will take 30 minutes to complete the OTCEM as it is a simple tick box system, with a box to leave brief written feedback. Time taken will vary between educators.

Do I have to complete the OTCEM?

Students must begin to evidence their competency. To benefit the students and fulfill requirements, we would really appreciate if you would start to use the OTCEM with your student.

How long is the student allowed to work on evidencing competence on placement?

The University of Newcastle suggests that students should be given a minimum of 2 hours a week for study during placement time, which can include the OTCEM and working on the OTCA website. Any additional time is at practice educator's discretion and is not an expectation of the university.

Access to the internet is difficult here, what happens then?

Students have details of all free internet sites in your area so they can access the website in their own time, even if they are 'away' on placement. Students may also choose to use their own internet access and share this with educators if they wish them to verify evidence.

How do I let the university know what I think of the OTCEM?

There is a formal evaluation of this project and a focus group of educators is planned for mid-May 2013. If you wish to know more about this please contact: Catherine.studdert@newcastle.edu.au

Alternatively, email: caroline.hills@newcastle.edu.au with both questions and/or comments on the OTCEM.

What does the OTCA website do for educators?

The website holds a range of resources for students and educators to support students' competency development.

I would like to add a resource to the OTCA website

We would really appreciate more resources for the website, so please contact us including both email addresses above.